

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Parker School District  
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2003-2004**

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**Dates of On Site Visit:** February 17-18, 2004

**Date of Report:** February 23, 2004

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

<b>Promising Practice</b>	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
<b>Meets Requirements</b>	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
<b>Needs Improvement</b>	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
<b>Out of Compliance</b>	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
<b>Not applicable</b>	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

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<b>Principle 1 – General Supervision</b>
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State Data Tables: B, C, D, E, F, G, H
- Student progress data
- Surveys
- Private school information
- Local Education Association (LEA) flow through funds request information
- Information on home school students
- Comprehensive plan
- Comprehensive system of personnel development plan

- District annual needs assessment
- Teacher Assistance Team (TAT): referral vs. non referral information
- Needs assessment information (such as personnel, facilities, etc)
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- Screening

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the district has identified systems for receiving and documenting referrals as specified through state regulations and school policies. The district follows state guidelines for reporting students who have been suspended, expelled or dropped out of school and when students voluntarily enroll in private schools. District personnel are fully licensed or certified to work with children with disabilities.

## **Validation Results**

### **Promising practice**

Through teacher and administrative interview the monitoring team identified two areas of promising practices within the Parker School District. Technology has provided a variety of ways to address reading and math skills for all students as listed below.

The district has implemented programs, such as Accelerated Reader and STAAR Reading and Math, for the purpose of increasing reading and math scores for all students. The computerized self-paced tutorial program, Success Maker, helps all students, grades 3 through 6, succeed in the general curriculum. The district has seen improvements in the areas of reading and math scores since implementing these programs.

The district has utilized the Smart Board in several elementary classrooms and in high school biology and computer classes. This computerized program displays computer images on a large board and enhances interactive learning for all students.

The district routinely utilizes the Parker website to keep parents abreast of their child's attendance, discipline issues, transcript and grades. Many of the elementary teachers have added weekly spelling lists to their particular webpage, other teachers include curriculum links, some web pages are interactive and some teacher's list long-term writing assignments on their particular web page.

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee's conclusion under general supervision. The policies and procedures utilized by the district for referrals, reporting suspension and expulsions, providing services for students with a disability who are enrolled in a private school and the use of licensed/certified staff meet the requirements of state and federal guidelines.

## **Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education**

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

## **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State Tables B,C,E,F,K, L, M, N
- Age at referral
- Number of students screened
- Personnel development education
- Preschool age
- # of referrals not resulting in evaluations
- School age
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- Comprehensive plan
- Surveys

### **Promising practice**

The steering committee concluded the administration has been trained on the policies and procedures regarding the removal of students with disabilities. Technological advancements are used to accommodate students within the regular curriculum. The school district operates an onsite daycare facility, offers an after-school program which is open to all students, Kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grades, and an after-school tutoring program which is open to students grades Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, including students with disabilities.

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the district provides a free appropriate public education for all students within their district. Policies and procedures are in place to address suspension or expulsions for students with disabilities but have not had to implement them.

## **Validation Results**

### **Promising practice**

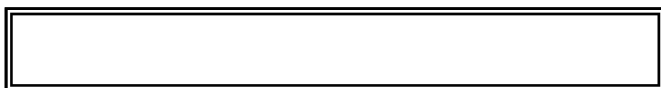
Through teacher and administration interviews the monitoring team concluded the district offers a variety of programs to provide support to parents and young students.

The K-6 after-school program is curriculum based, giving assistance with homework, tutoring, and/or providing additional time on the Success Maker program. The Extended Learning Time program is open to any junior high student who wants additional time to work on assignments or needs tutoring. Both programs are staffed by at least one certified teacher along with one or two assistants. The junior high program is the result of the district responding to parental requests for a continuation of the K-6 after-school program. The district also has an onsite daycare facility, which provides services for children from birth to age 5, including children with disabilities.

The district offers an 11 week summer school program which is open to all students. The groups are divided by ages; Kindergarten-3<sup>rd</sup> grade and grades 4-6. Emphasis is placed on enrichment through art, recreation, and field trips. Although there is a fee for this program, parents can apply for scholarships.

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.



A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State tables G,H, I, J,
- TAT information
- Teacher file reviews
- Initial referral
- Surveys
- Parent and Teacher report forms
- Comprehensive plan
- Parent form for information

#### **Promising practice**

The steering committee recognizes the district's efforts to provide professional development opportunities to all district employees. Special education teachers are making a concerted effort to improve their effectiveness regarding evaluation procedures and instruments.

#### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the district provides appropriate evaluations/reevaluations prior to determining eligibility for special education. Parents have input into the evaluation process and appropriate evaluation tools are used during the evaluation process. The district uses the state guidelines for determining eligibility for special education.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Promising practice**

The monitoring team recognizes the efforts of the district to provide professional development opportunities to all district staff. The monitoring team could not validate this as a promising practice as it meets state and federal requirement.

Through file review with special education teachers, the monitoring team could not validate the use of evaluation procedures and instruments as a promising practice. Although they are using a variety of evaluation tools, they obtain parental input and they continue with professional development, these are required by state and federal regulations

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee findings that the district has parent input into the evaluation. This is a state and federal requirement.

Refer to out of compliance for the issues of the district's use of following state eligibility guidelines when determining eligibility for special education and the district's use of appropriate evaluation tools during the evaluation process.

#### **Out of compliance**

**24:05:25:04.02. Determination of needed evaluation data.**

As part of an initial evaluation or reevaluation, the individual education program team and other individuals with knowledge and skills necessary to interpret evaluation data, shall determine what evaluation data is needed to support eligibility and the child's special education needs.

In all student files reviewed, with the exception of speech/language and early childhood, the monitoring team found that students were given a Behavior Assessment for Children (BASC) and the Tree House Person. Interviews with special education teachers indicated the Cornbelt Cooperative has told them that behavior assessment must be completed on all students suspected of a disability in which a psychological evaluation is requested. Based on this information, the monitoring concluded the district does not consider the child's individual needs when making the determination of needed evaluation data.

#### **24:05:25:04. Evaluation procedures.**

School districts shall ensure that evaluation procedures include a variety of assessment tools and strategies are used to gather relevant functional and development information about the child, including information provided by the parents. The evaluation must be sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the child's special education and related services needs, whether or not commonly linked to the disability category in which the child has been classified.

Through file review, the monitoring team concluded the district does not consistently gather relevant functional and developmental information. In six files, a functional evaluation was either not administered and/or the functional information was not compiled into a report. The purpose of functional evaluation is to determine specific skills the student has and needs to acquire. This skill-based information must then be compiled into a report which is given to the parents and is brought forth into the present level of performance. This is used by the IEP team to develop skill-specific goals and objectives for the student.

Through file review, there was no medical report supporting the category of other health impaired in two files for students identified as other health impaired. As part of the evaluation process the team needs a current medical report to support other health impaired or it needs to bring forward previous medical information as part of the evaluation and eligibility process.

Through file review, the monitoring team concluded transition was not consistently addressed as part of the evaluation process. Transition evaluations were conducted but not consistently compiled into a report which could be used to identify areas of strengths and needs and given to parents. In one of the six transition files reviewed, a transition evaluation was not conducted. In another file an evaluation was conducted but not compiled into a report or brought forth into the present levels of performance.

#### **Issues requiring immediate attention**

Applicable ARSD(s) 24:05:24.01:01. Students with disabilities defined. Students with disabilities are students evaluated in accordance with chapter 24:05:25 as having autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, hearing impairment, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairments, emotional disturbance, specific learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, traumatic brain injury, or visual impairments including blindness, which adversely affects educational performance, and who, because of those disabilities, need special education or special education and related services. If it is determined through an appropriate evaluation, under chapter 24:05:25, that a student has one of the disabilities identified in this chapter, but only needs a related service and not special education, the student is not a student with a disability under this article.

The IEP team needs to revisit the issue of eligibility for one student identified under the category of learning disability. Through proper evaluation the student was identified as having a learning disability only in the area of math. Through review of the student's file, the monitoring team found the student's program did not address the area of math either in the area of academic goals or in the area of transition goals. In the present levels of performance the team documented the student "does not have a math class

this year. For this reason, his father wanted to discontinue his math goals.” He has one goal which relates to completing and turning in assignments. The configuration of services shows the student is receiving 3 to 4.5 hours of resource room time in English and 4 hours per week on study skills in the resource room. None of these address the student’s learning disability in the area of math. The team needs to convene and address the student’s disability in the area of math.

## **Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards**

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State Table L and M
- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Parental right document
- Consent and prior notice forms
- Public awareness information
- FERPA disclosure
- Consent and prior notice forms
- File reviews
- IEPs
- SPED handbook

#### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the district ensures policies and procedures regarding the need for surrogate parents, parental examination of records, dealing with complaints, and dealing with due process issues follow federal and state guidelines. Parents are consistently given notification of their rights and parents are fully informed of what activity they are giving consent for.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee. The policies and procedures addressing surrogate parents, examination of records, and dealing with complaints and due process are all state and federal requirements.

#### **Out of compliance**

**24:05:30:04. Prior notice and parent consent.** Written notice which meets the requirements of § 24:05:30:05 must be given to the parents five days before the district proposes or refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child or the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child.

Informed parental consent must be obtained before conducting a first-time evaluation, reevaluation, and before initial placement of a child in a program providing special education or special education and related services.

Through file review, the monitoring team concluded the district does not consistently evaluate all areas listed on the prior notice/permission to test. Evaluations were conducted when there was on parental consent obtained. In one file the prior notice did not identify achievement and ability as areas to be evaluated but those areas were evaluated. In a second file, personality was listed as an area to be evaluated but there was no evidence that the area of personality was evaluated.

## **Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program**

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- File reviews
- Student progress data
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- State K and N
- Surveys
- Report form
- Complaints
- IEP's
- Personnel training

#### **Promising practice**

The steering committee identified the collaboration of general and special education teachers for the growth of individual students as a promising practice.

#### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the district uses appropriate team membership at all IEP meetings, parental prior notices have the required content, and the IEP format has the appropriate content. Policies and procedures are followed when developing IEPs, which are developed only for students who are eligible for special education or special education and related services.

#### **Needs improvement**

The steering committee identified the district needs to explain test results more thoroughly to parents and need to consistently write goals and objectives that are measurable.

#### **Out of compliance**

The steering committee concluded one student listed on the 2002 child count did not have an active IEP in place at the time of the 2002 child count.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team concluded the district demonstrates collaboration between general and special education teachers for the benefit of all students. This collaboration is a key component in providing special education services in the least restrictive setting as addressed by the IEP team.

The monitoring committee agrees with all areas identified as meets requirements under individualized education program by the steering committee. Using forms which contain the required content, appropriate membership at IEP meetings, and the policies and procedures addressing eligibility for special education services are required by state and federal guidelines.

Through file review, the monitoring team concluded the district consistently uses measurable goals and objectives when writing IEPs. All files reviewed by the team had measurable goals and objectives.

### **Needs improvement**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee finding that the district needs to better explain test results to parents. The district's self-assessment report documents 92% of the parents surveyed felt test results were explained in a way they can understand.

### **Out of compliance**

**24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program.** Each student's individualized education program shall include a statement of the student's present levels of educational performance, including, how the student's disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as for nondisabled students), and an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will not participate with nondisabled students in the regular class and in activities described in this section.

Through file review, the monitoring team concluded the district does not consistently address all areas required in the present levels of performance. Parent input was not documented in the present level of performance in seven files. In five files, there was no statement as to how the student's disability impacts their progress in the general curriculum.

When the IEP team addresses placement through the IEP process, the team does not justify or describe why the services cannot be provided in each spectrum of the continuation of placement until the team accepts a placement in the continuum. This occurred in five files. Instead of justifying placement, the team described the configuration of services. For example, "Resource Room: This placement was accepted. Student will attend both math and study hall in the resource room. During math, student's goals will be worked on. During study hall, he will receive tutoring help, reinforcement of skills taught in the regular setting, help studying for tests and completing homework. Both classes will be held either 5x/2 weeks (90 minutes each) or 5x/week (50 minutes each)."

### **24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program**

For each student beginning at age 14 or younger if determined appropriate by the placement committee, and updated annually, a statement of the transition service needs of the student under the applicable components of the student's individualized education program that focuses on the student's course of study such as participation in advanced-placement courses or a vocational education program and for each student beginning at age 16 or younger, if determined appropriate by the placement committee, a statement of the needed transition services, as defined in § 24:05:27:13.02, including, as applicable, interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages.



Through file review, the monitoring team concluded the district does not consistently use an outcome oriented process when addressing transition. Services that would promote movement into adulthood were not developed as a coordinated set of activities. The service plans contained general statements but were not specific and did not address services that the student needed to accomplish their desired post-school goals. In the six files reviewed, no service areas were identified as needing services. For example, post secondary education for a 19 year old stated, “student and his father have contacted an Air Force recruiter about joining, going through basic training, and becoming involved with the military police.” But the team did not address what else needs to happen to finalize this transition area.

#### **Issues requiring immediate attention**

**24:05:17:03. Annual report of children served.** In its annual report of children served, the division shall indicate the number of children with disabilities receiving special education and related services on December 1 of that school year, the number of children with disabilities aged 3 to 5, inclusive, who are receiving a free appropriate public education, the number of children with disabilities aged 6 to 17, inclusive, and 18 to 21, inclusive; and the number of those children with disabilities aged 3 to 21, inclusive, for each year of age, starting with age 3 within each disability category. For the purpose of this section, a child's age is the child's actual age on the date of the child count, December 1. The division may not report a child under more than one disability category.

The monitoring team agrees with the area identified as out of compliance under individualized education program by the steering committee. The monitoring team could not locate an active IEP for the 2002 child count for one student.

**24:05:17:05. Children included in report.** The division may include children with disabilities in its report who are enrolled in a school or program which is operated or supported by a public agency and which either provides them with both special education and related services or provides them only with special education that meet state standards.

Through file review, the monitoring team identified two students who were on the December 2002 child count but had been home schooled by the parent since November, 2002. On November 25, 2002 the superintendent informed the parent through a letter that her children’s attendance center is “home-school”. He also assured the parent that their attendance at the Parker Elementary School remains available to them. The two students were dropped from the district enrollment at that time and should not have been placed on the 2002 child count.

### **Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment**

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

#### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State tables E,G, I, J, F, and N
- File reviews
- Surveys

**Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the district's policies address the least restrictive environment for students. The district utilizes written behavioral intervention plans for those students who need them.

**Needs improvement**

The steering committee concludes the district needs to implement more inclusionary practices in the preschool setting.

**Validation Results**

**Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee. The district's policies to address the least restrictive environment are required by state and federal guidelines.

**Needs improvement**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as needs improvement under least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee. Through interview, the district indicated they would like to begin coordinating activities between the preschool program and Kindergarten to promote a smooth transition into Kindergarten and to provide opportunities for interaction with non-disabled peers.